

PS

3535

027R5

1918<sup>a</sup>

Rimes  
in  
Olive Drab

Sergeant John Pierre Roche



Class PS 3535

Book 027R5

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*Go, little book,  
You have your "discharge";  
Go seek the world—  
The public at large;  
Go with the tales,  
As versed by a "Sarge",  
Of our olive drab existence.*

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By Sergeant John Pierre Roche

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Poetry Magazine

New Edition, Revised and Enlarged  
Published, 1918

RIMES  
IN  
OLIVE DRAB

*By* SERGEANT  
JOHN PIERRE ROCHE

NEW YORK  
ROBERT M. McBRIDE & CO.  
1918

753535  
1027R5  
1918a

If there is anything in  
this little book worthy  
of the dedication —

*To my Mother*

31

AUG 29 1918

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no 1



## *To the American Foreign Legion*

God of might, give me the force of an arm  
Strong enough to wither when I strike;  
God of right, keep me freed from harm  
That I may die as I should like.

I ask no craven's freedom from the toll  
Of the legions marching towards the night,  
But when my name is added to the scroll,  
Grant I have struck and struck with might.

God of might, save me from a weakling's spleen,  
Give me the chance to strike as does a man—  
Not as a cog in a drilled machine,  
But in single fury as a freeman can.

God of right, do not keep me long  
From skulking death, if it lie in wait.  
Lord, let me shout in Victory's song,  
Or be swept aside by an equal hate.

*God of might, hear my plea;  
Keep me not from the strife and fray;  
Let me strike, O God of right,  
This very day, this very day!*

## *A Polish Alliance*

Romance has come into my life  
And come its way a-winging;  
Elusive sprite so often sought,  
And so my heart is singing.  
I never thought that I should meet  
My fate while clad in khaki,  
Because, remodel as you may,  
This issue stuff is tacky;  
But love is here and here to stay,  
To have and hold unending—  
I'll woo and win this latest love  
Against the world contending.

No Norman maid has found her way  
Into my heart's abysses;  
No English girl has made me hers;  
In fact, no foreign misses  
Could claim the niche that this love owns  
Who makes my life so zestful,  
And yet I'll say my new love's name  
Is in a way distressful.  
I only hope my love's returned,  
He's but a simple rookie—  
A former Harvey chef who's now  
Warsinski, our new "cookie"!

## *To a Crowd in a Cabaret*

The flash of flesh and shaded lights,  
The crack of corks and glutton's fare;  
The fog of smoke and laughter shrill:  
Is it for these that we prepare?

The shift of feet and rhythmic beat  
Of banjo, drums and saxaphones,  
With swaying forms in serried throng:  
Is it for these that France atones?

The preening glance and rounder's stare,  
The whirl and swirl of song and dance;  
"To jazz and jest!" with brimming glass:  
Is it for these they die in France?

## *A Year From Now*

There is a pine tree  
Standing in the moonlight  
Where, from my tent,  
I can see it lift its head  
Against the sky,  
Standing guard over men  
Who, a year from now,  
May know such beauty  
Only through the voice  
Of others.

Down the Company street  
A Victrola is playing—  
Julia Claussen is singing  
An aria from “Samson and Delilah”  
Yet, a year from now,  
Those listening men  
May hear only  
The wobbling hiss  
Of gas shells.

In a tent across the way,  
A crowd of rookies  
Are singing  
“Good-bye Broadway—Hello France”  
With great gusto;  
And yet, a year from now,  
Those fresh young voices  
May be mute.

## *To a Violinist*

*(now a "buck private")*

The throbbing tone of a violin  
    With the tingling thrill of the concert hall,  
Played to a group in a trooper's tent,  
    To ears attuned to a bugle call;  
A melody wrung by his fleeting bow  
    With master touch and facile ease,  
To wing its way through the flapping walls—  
    A Kreisler Caprice—his "Viennese".

As his fingers stop on the lilting strings  
    To touch a note to glowing life,  
It seems to be unthinking waste  
    To pledge this gift in futile strife—  
A genius risked against a shell,  
    A talent thrown without a thought  
On scales now bent with human weight—  
    Is peace to be so dearly bought?

## *To our Indulgent Friends*

*"Today I got your letter,  
Saying that a sweater  
Was on its way to me"—*  
(This makes the fifth that's flitting  
Our way from angels knitting  
For those to cross the sea)

*"The wristlets are essential"—*  
(And yet a penitential  
Feeling fills our breast,  
To think that we have seven,  
Or maybe it's eleven,  
Already in our chest)

*"The 'cigs' are just a blessing"—*  
(Emotions quite distressing  
Confound us as we think  
Of "smokes" beyond computing,  
And all the artful looting  
We've done with pen and ink)

The things they send to rookies,  
From sleeping bags to cookies,  
They come on every mail.  
A ton of stuff we're stacking,  
And when it comes to packing  
We'll have to hold a sale.

### L'ENVOI

*Kind friends, accept our thanks,  
But General Orders say  
A hundred pounds is all  
That we may take away;  
So kindly, if you will,  
Abstain from an addition  
To what we have, until  
We get a Lieut's commission.*

## *The Latest Horror of War*

*"Two hundred delegates to the Middlesex County W. C. T. U. assembled for their annual meeting in the First Baptist Church at Watertown adopted resolutions condemning the practice of sending gifts of tobacco to soldiers and sailors. Dr. Louis Rand of Newton, who presented the resolutions, spoke of the injurious effects of tobacco and urged the women to send books instead."—News Item.*

It's mighty nice to know,  
When muck you're wading through,  
That your health is in the hands  
Of watchful ladies, who  
Are hep that nicotine  
Is worse than German spleen  
And are shipping books for you  
To the land of parlez-vous.

When frozen to the waist  
By a wind that's whistling keen,  
There's nothing quite so sweet  
As a book by Laura Jean;  
When shells are whizzing past,  
A Chambers, yes, his last,  
Or Anna Katherine Green,  
Will brighten up the scene.



When sleeping in the rain  
Although the light is dim,  
Just read a page or two  
In "They" or maybe "Kim";  
And when gassed by nitric shells  
With every breath a stab,  
Try some of James' gab,  
Pick up "The Book of Kells"  
Or the latest thing by Wells!

#### L'ENVOI

Listen, ladies, there's cussing enough in the army now, but if you want the boys to put some real pep in their profanity, just keep on powwowing about your dream of a smokeless army reading Browning and Shaw. The solacing whiff of a "cig" isn't such a hell of a lot to give to a man expected to kill or be killed; and you never saw a bunch of soldiers try to take your tea away and yet you hit the feathers early, get your three squares on a china plate and don't have to mount guard or do "kitchen police"; to say nothing of hiking, drilling or going over the top. It is silly to yap about the baneful effects of nicotine upon a pair of lungs that ten seconds after the last "drag" on a cigarette may be blown to blazes. It's too bad to have to talk this way to a lot of ladies who have been raised nice, and who have good ideas on how to run a Sunday school, but when you think that some day our men over there may be feeding the hungry maw of a machine gun, with their tongues hanging out for a smoke, and not get it, just because a lot of hearth-warmers somewhere in Massachusetts framed up a nutty resolution, you can't blame us for treating you rough, can you?

## *The White Feather*

When England asked her sons  
To take up arms again,  
One brother said good-bye  
At dawn in the drizzling rain;  
And his step on the creaking stair  
Will never echo there

Again. Before he left  
He sat at his desk and wrote  
To his brother in the States—  
A simple, scrawling note  
To the brother who had spent  
His youth with him—and sent

It overseas. He wrote:  
“You know our plighted word  
To stand as one and fight,  
No matter what occurred—  
And now we see the day  
We sought in boyish play,

So come.” The letter sped  
Across the seas, and he  
Went out, as gentry do,  
In all fidelity  
To wait for the rendezvous—  
To wait and wonder, too.

He went and played the game,  
As any Eton lad  
Is taught to play, and stayed  
To give the best he had,  
Feeling that their troth  
Would surely bind them both;

And then his answer came  
From the brother overseas:  
He regretted—yes—and yet,  
So understand him please!

.....  
But his brother only knew  
That he must serve for two.

Through two campaigns he went,  
To see his comrades die;  
And then in the Dardanelles  
He met the Reaper's eye—  
And died in the drizzling rain,  
Crushed and torn with pain.

To the brother overseas  
Came a letter from the dead—  
Found in a steely grip,  
Its corners tinged with red—  
And when he tore the flap  
No writing met his sight,  
But on the floor there fell  
A single feather—*white!*

## *Honorably Discharged*

With the pallor  
Of the hospital  
In their thin cheeks—  
Dull-eyed and insecure  
Of step, they come  
With their discharges.

Freed from the internment  
Of the base hospital,  
Foot-loose to go  
Where they will;  
To the hubbub of the city,  
To office or lathe,  
Or to the even days  
Of life in Vandalia,  
Or Cairo or Belvidere—  
Their journey ended  
Before its beginning.

With the surgeon's indictment  
In their hands,  
They sag against the wall—  
The salvage of War.

## *Carpe Diem*

Out from the House of Life into the Night of Chance  
To walk untrodden ways as toys of Circumstance.

*What does the morrow hold?  
Who can tell—who shall say  
When reckoned by a score  
We total day by day.*

Through labyrinths unknown we stumble, plunge ahead,  
And some will pass unhurt while others greet the dead.

*What does the scorer say?  
Why try to answer yet—  
We will not be afraid  
Until the Thing is met.*

We find in us the key to sacrifices new,  
So when we meet with death, it may be simple, too.

*What does the cryptic read?  
Conjecture as you may—  
Come link arms with Life;  
Live gladly for today!*

## *Trains*

Over thousands of miles  
Of shining steel rails,  
Past green and red semaphores  
And unheeding flagmen,  
Trains are running,  
Trains, trains, trains.

Rattling through tunnels  
And clicking by way stations,  
Curving through hills, past timber,  
Out into the open places,  
Flashing past silos and barns  
And whole villages,  
Until finally they echo  
Against the squat factories  
That line the approach to the cities.

Trains, trains, trains  
With the fire boxes wide open,  
Giant Moguls and old-time Baldwins  
And oil-burners on the Southern Pacific,  
Fire boxes wide open  
Flaring against the night,  
Like a tremendous watch fire  
Where the sentries cluster at their post.

Trains, trains, trains  
Serpentine strings of cars  
Loaded with boys and men—  
The legion of the ten-year span  
To whom has been given the task  
Of seeking the Great Adventure.

Swaying through the North and South,  
And East and West,  
Freighted with the Willing  
And the Unwilling;  
Packed with the Thinking  
And the Unthinking,  
Pushing on to the Unknown  
Away from the shelter and security  
Of the accustomed into the Great Adventure.

Trains, trains, trains  
With their coach sides scrawled  
With chalked bravado and, sometimes,  
With their windows black  
With yelling boys,  
In open-mouthed exultation  
That they do not feel,  
Rushing further and further  
From the known into the unseeable.

Trains, trains, trains  
With sky-larking boys in khaki,  
Munching sandwiches and drinking pop;  
Or, tired and without their depot swagger,  
Curled up on the red-plush seats;  
Or asleep, with a stranger, in the Pullmans.

They rush past our camp,  
Which lies against the railroad,  
With the crossing alarm jangling caution  
And fade into the dust or night,  
Leaving us to conjecture where  
As they have left others to wonder—  
As they must wonder themselves  
When they are done  
With the shouting and hand-shaking  
And kissing and hat-waving and singing.

Trains, trains, trains  
Clicking on into unforecasted days—  
Away from the shelter and security  
Of the accustomed into the Great Adventure.



## *On Guard*

A cloudless sky of peaceful stars  
Above a camp in tranquil rest;  
The keen wind stirs the pine trees,  
And the white road stretches on  
Like a path to the warring world.

Halt! Who goes there?

Was it nothing but the wind?  
There is a shadow on the grass  
And the crunch of brush underfoot.

Advance, friend, and be recognized!

*Let us see the Future's face:  
See if it is friend or foe;  
Let us tear its mask away—  
If this is Fate, then tell us so!*

## *Mike Dillon, Doughboy*

Mike Dillon was a doughboy  
and wore the issue stuff;  
He wasn't much to look at—  
in fact, was rather rough;  
He served his time as rookie—  
at drilling in the sun,  
And cleared a lot of timber  
and polished up his gun.

Mike Dillon was a private  
with all the word entails;  
He cussed and chewed tobacco  
and overlooked his nails.  
You never saw Mike Dillon  
at dances ultra nice;  
In fact, inspection found him  
enjoying body lice.

If Mike had married money  
or had a little drag,  
He might have got a brevet  
and missed a little "fag";  
But as a social figure  
he simply wasn't there—  
So Mike continued drilling  
and knifing up his fare.

In course of time they shipped 'em  
and shipped 'em over where  
A man like Mike can sidestep  
the frigid social stare,  
And do the job of soldier  
without the fancy frills,  
And keep a steady footing  
in the pace that really kills.

Now Mike did nothing special;  
he only did his best:  
He stuck and "went on over"—  
and got it in the chest;  
Played it fair and squarely  
without a social air,  
And Mike is now in Heaven  
and at least a Corporal there!

## *The 108th Engineers Passes*

The staccato of drums,  
Beat upon beat;  
Lines of legs  
That flash apart  
And close again  
To flash apart  
In swinging step;  
The crisp fanfare  
Of strident bugles  
Above the sharp crash  
Of drums;  
Rifles a-slant,  
With bayonets  
A single flash in the sun.  
A blotch of red  
On an orderly's arm—  
The splash of colors  
Against the dust,  
And legs flashing  
As one.....

Down the road  
The dull beat  
Of drums  
And the fading cadence  
Of bugles.

## *Life as a Gage You Flung*

There in an alien land,  
Lie quietly,  
Alien no longer now  
For you and me;  
Fragrant the thoughts of you,  
Rare was your soul;  
Life as a gage you flung,  
Facing the goal.

Life as a gage you flung,  
Flung as a rose;  
Gave it as gentry do,  
Gladly to those  
Who gave their glowing youth  
Gladly as you.  
Live in the heart of me—  
I gave you, too.

## *With Guidons Flying Red*

Into the clouds of stifling dust  
With guidons flying red;  
With trombone and trumpet  
Flashing through the mirage,  
Leading the shadowy silhouette  
Of horsemen riding on  
Into the swirling dust;  
With the sea-beat of caissons,  
A deeper note against  
The shouts of command  
And clattering hoof beats,  
The Battery goes.

Into the clouds of swirling dust—  
Choking, sight-blearing dust—  
A-top of jolting caissons  
Which rumble on relentlessly  
Until the silhouette is blurred  
And gone—gone with the gleam of silver  
And guidons flying red.

Into the clouds of whirling dust  
Goes the Battery on its hike,  
And back through the dust  
It will come—with the grumble  
Of caissons and clatter  
Of hoof beats and shouted commands;  
With trombone and trumpet  
Gleaming at the column's head.

But some dull morning,  
Into the mire of Flanders Field  
(Instead of the dust of this mimic march)  
With no guidons flying red  
And no silver gleam at the column's head,  
The Battery will go—  
A shadowy silhouette  
Of horsemen riding on.

## *The Mystery of the Mess Fund*

A cussing crew of "truckies" fetched from  
San Antone

Where God Almighty's sunshine burned 'em  
to the bone;

A fighting bunch of reg'lars shooting craps  
and Mex,

And driving o. d. Packards through mud  
above their necks.

When messing all together down in San  
Antone,

They had a whoppin' mess fund (each com-  
pany has its own);

Then orders came to leave there; so they  
cut the crew in twain

And some drove up to Houston and some  
went east by train.



But the bunch that hit it eastwards took the  
fund along,  
While the crew that came to Houston found  
the money gone;  
So somewhere on Long Island a crew is  
messaging right,  
While somewhere down in Texas a crew is  
nursing spite.

### L'ENVOI

Now I'm not exactly yellow,  
But I'd still donate my chance  
Of standing within gunshot  
When those "truckies" meet in France.

## *"You Were So White, So Soft"*

I knew your gentle touch  
Through all those many years—  
Unheeding then, but now  
How memory endears  
That golden span of time  
And makes me wish anew  
That, since you could not come,  
I might have stayed with you.

We said good-bye, and yet  
I went without a thought  
Of what my going meant,  
Or how you held me taut;  
And yet the thought of you  
Each night repose defeats—  
Ah, would I knew again  
The luxury of sheets!

## To F. K. M.

The earth lies stark in its dreary shroud,  
As dead as the buds that flowered May.  
The moon is wrapped in a fleeing cloud;  
O, for the song of your voice!

*You had love in your voice  
So thrillingly true,  
That the pipes of Pan  
Were an echo of you!*

My heart grows cold in fright of the blast,  
Like the cry of a loon in a haunted house  
Is the voice of the wind as it rushes past;  
O, for the touch of your hand!

*You had June in your heart  
And beauty so rare,  
That the roses of God  
Bent low in despair!*

My soul is numbed by the chill of the night;  
A lonely mourner on a lonely hill,  
I stand and watch a phantom light;  
O, for the warmth of your lips!

## *To a Baneful Bugler*

We know a bugle's hard to play—  
Unlike a ukelele,  
It's not picked up by everyone—  
And though you practice daily,  
We cannot help but feel at times  
(If we may trust our hearing)  
That you should hold another job  
And not be bugleering.

A bugle at its best is not  
A treat for aural senses,  
Besides you know that any call  
Which routs us from our tents is  
Regarded as an overt act;  
So kindly when you're playing,  
Desist from flatting all the notes—  
Your "blues" are most dismaying.

You wake us up at dawn;  
You snuff our lights at night;  
You pipe us into mess,  
And your pitch is seldom right—  
So pardon us for saying  
That often when you're playing  
We wish that you had felt  
You were too proud to fight!

## *The Thread of Life*

When the thread of Life is drawn out taut,  
And Death lies down with you,  
You come to see your fellowman  
From a different point of view;  
You come to find in a bunkie's heart  
A scar that's deep and red,  
And to clasp his hand as a brother would  
With mighty little said.

When you've reckoned life in terms of years  
And it comes to counting days,  
You throw away the surface grit  
And work the lode that pays.  
On a killing hike through dust or mud,  
When you pull at the same canteen—  
By God, it makes a man of you,  
Or something mighty mean!

You find yourself by losing self  
And learn to sweat and grin;  
To bear the brunt of circumstance—  
To shun the one great sin  
Of slinking back or quitting  
Before the job is through;  
And while you count each day as lost,  
It's moulding, *making* you!

## *The American Army*

Our fighting men we deem  
To be composed of Brown,  
And Smith and Black and Jones  
And White—and so on down  
The lengthy list of those  
Conventional monickers;  
And yet the pay roll shows  
Our martial force to be  
A mighty melting pot  
That boasts among the lot  
Some handles quaint as these:  
Michael Spryszyriski, Stanislaw  
Katarskis, Alexander Kvederis,  
Joseph Luchinskis, Jan  
Trozonowicz, John Zygmunt,  
Anton Yowisc, Campioni  
Eucarpio, Guiseppi Del Vecchio.

Our Nation's fathers, who  
Upheld a fledgling cause,  
Would find it quite a task  
For their untutored jaws,  
To call the muster rolls  
And stutter over names  
Of Croations, Greeks and Poles,  
And appellations of  
Hungarians and "wops,"  
Until endeavor stops

At stumbling blocks like these:  
Rode Burmudzya, Tony  
Karpankas, Vincenzo Zawelsky,  
Zajoc Fronciszek, Woclaw  
Kivikowski, Valeri Valeriano,  
Alkie Gozazialski, Wojceich  
Czajka, Ignazio Digangelioa.

Yet though a score of "skis"  
Occur for every Jones,  
And though the company clerk  
Espies their length and groans—  
When bugles blow parade  
And medals are bestowed,  
A nation's accolade  
May rest upon the straps  
Of these same "hunkies" whose  
Dire consonants abuse  
Our ears—the honor list of:  
Adam Blasczcynski, Paul  
Ciszewski, Steve Czarmiski,  
Ernst Grantkowski, Alex  
Kwiatkowski, Micyslaw Machedweski,  
Kasimir Skupniewicz, Max  
Skarbonkiewicz, Xenephon Chmileszki.

## *Away*

From the silent street  
Comes the beat of feet,  
Dawn and the rain.  
Hushed the city's voice,  
Quiet the drums;  
You are going down—  
Down to entrain.

Gone—and I bereft,  
Take the love you left—  
Hold it as mine;  
Love that I could give  
Only to you—  
Love that I will keep  
Amarynthine.



## *In Praise of Paper Plates*

In ante-bellum days  
When living as a "civ,"  
We used to wonder at  
A woman's faint procliv-  
ity for doing dishes.

But, since we wash our kit,  
We've come to know the wishes  
For freedom it engenders  
Among the home defenders.

We've done it many times  
In quite a cheerful mood,  
But other meals it took  
Our appetite for food  
To sense the task awaiting—  
To know it was our chore  
When done with masticating.  
It's the deadly repetition  
That spoils your disposition.

So now we view the job  
The same as housewives do;  
And you can rest assured  
That when this war is through,  
If we should go a-courting  
And do a Lohengrin,  
If a maid we can't be sporting  
We will, by all the Fates,  
Resort to paper plates!

## *The Incinerator*

Every once in a while  
I see a "kitchen police"  
At the incinerator  
Shoveling up tin cans.  
They are not the sort of tin cans  
You see on the shelves  
Of a grocery store—  
Their fancy colored labels  
Are gone and only  
The charred tinplate itself  
Is left, battered and hammered  
Past recognition—  
All according to the regulations  
Duly enforced by the Sanitary Officer.

And every time I pass  
A man in khaki  
Near a mess shack,  
Shoveling up  
Those bent and broken tins,  
I think of other boys in khaki—  
With puttees shined,  
And creased breeches,  
And starched blouses,  
And gay hat cords—  
Waiting like bright-colored tins  
On a grocer's shelves,  
With War standing  
Shovel in hand  
At the incinerator.

## *Christmas Furloughs*

The C. O.\* put the letter down,  
Whose wording military  
Was just the same as many more,  
And said, "It seems a very  
Peculiar thing that at this time  
The health of loving parents  
Should prove to give such grave alarm  
That they require their Terence,  
Or John or James or Theodore  
To come at once—"if not before'."

And as he spoke, he paused to note  
The application's dating,  
And you could see the C. O. was  
Quite sagely estimating  
That ten days leave was just enough  
To span the gala season  
Of Christmas-tide at home with them;—  
And then he knew the reason  
Was just an epidemic of  
Lonely boys and mother-love.

---

\*C. O. is the common abbreviation for Commanding Officer.

# *More Horrors of War*

## No. 1

The almost tenor  
Who is always going over the top  
Note of his range,  
And insists on singing in the shower  
When you're all lathered up  
And can't retreat—  
Or in the "jit" going to town  
Which is anguishing enough,  
Lord knows,  
Without having to listen  
To "Sw-e-et Ad-e-line,"  
Accompanied by a fanfare  
Of spring squeaks and body rattles.

## No. 2

The correspondent  
Who begins her letter,  
"Well, how do you like the army  
By this time?"  
And then goes on to say  
She doesn't understand  
Why you haven't written her,  
Because one must have  
A lot of time in the army,  
So she will expect a long letter  
In the very near future—  
And closes with  
"I do hope the war will soon be over!"

No. 3

The rookie with the ukelele  
Who has decided to take up music  
To help his tentmates  
Pass the lonely hours,  
And who plays "Joan of Arc"  
In a way that would start  
The French Revolution  
All over again,  
And who gets up at daylight  
On Sunday mornings—  
When you don't have to fall out  
For reveille—  
To practice the new music  
His sister sent him—  
A new piece called  
"My Rosary."

No. 4

The laundryman who sends back  
Your best khaki suit,  
Looking like the fake marble paper  
They use in apartment buildings,  
And who shrinks an o. d. shirt  
Till it looks like a chest protector,  
And then doesn't bring back  
Your stuff until Tuesday  
When you have a date  
With the Mustering Officer of the Division  
For nine o'clock Sunday morning.

## *The Food I Left Behind Me*

We heard today from one among  
The very first to cross the sea.  
“I’ve slept in the rain and mud,” he said,  
“Where candles are a luxury.  
Though it may be that your reply  
To this will never find me,  
I only know of one regret—  
The food I left behind me!

“I’ve slept with rats in crater holes—  
I’ve sniffed the gases—fought the lice—  
I’ve passed up sleep and passed up smokes,  
The thousand things you sacrifice;  
But here I stay to see it through.  
There’s just one tie to bind me  
To the life I lived so long ago—  
The food I left behind me!

“To think of salads, steaks and chops,  
Potatoes, pie and savory fish  
I left upon my dinner plate!  
I often wish I had some dish  
I spurned in the past whose very sight  
Today would nearly blind me—  
Would I had what waiters got  
Of the food I left behind me!

“Those plates of luscious edibles  
I nibbled at and pushed away—  
Now rise again like steaming wraiths  
And haunt me every eatless day.  
Oh, someone send me kindly  
A table d’hôte allowance of  
The food I left behind me!”

## *Gone*

Gone  
Are the lull  
Of your voice  
And the play  
Of your white hands  
Against your hair.

Gone  
The slenderness  
And youth of you—  
The silken tracery  
Of your loveliness.

Gone  
Your eager lips  
And the cool warmth  
Of your slender fingers.

Only  
Your letter before me  
Saying again and again,  
“I love you!”



## Camp . . . at Night

The night comes down with a sweep of stars,  
And through the pines the tents aglow  
Like giant jack o'lanterns gleam.

The grey mists rise—a scarf of tulle—  
While shadow forms pass to and fro  
The flare of fire at the sentry post.

The lonely songs in doubtful key—  
The thrumming whirr of an aeroplane

## The growing still . . . lights out and "Taps."

## *Nobody Realizes How Serious It Is*

We went to town in a jitney bus,  
And the "civ" who shared a seat with us  
Began to chat about the war,  
As many "civs" have done before—  
And the text of his talk was mostly this:

*"I was telling some of the boys  
last night that nobody in this  
country realizes how serious  
this war is, and they won't,  
either, until some of our boys  
get shot over there and we see  
their names in the paper."*

We stopped at an "approved" cafe,  
To dine in a frugal, Hoover way,  
And our vis-a-vis soon broke the ice  
To give the Staff some sage advice—  
But the gist of his speech was mostly this:

*"I was just telling the Mrs.  
this morning that nobody in  
this country realizes how  
serious this war is, and they  
won't, either, until some of  
our boys get shot over there  
and we see their names in the  
paper."*

We went to dance in a khaki crush,  
And above the din of social gush,  
We heard a flapper's cooing tones  
As she told her partner, Sargint Jones,  
The throbbing thought in her marcelled head:

*"I was just telling Betty  
this afternoon, when I had  
tea with her, that nobody in  
this country realizes how  
serious this war is, and they  
won't, either, until some of  
our boys get shot over there  
and we see their names in the  
paper."*

## *It's Awful Far from My Folks*

A national army rookie—  
A city stoop in his back  
And eyes of helpless wonder—  
Against the company shack;  
Come with a train of others,  
Passed through the draft machine,  
Shipped from the camp at Rockford  
To face this new unseen.  
We put the bromide query,  
“How do you like it here  
In the land of Texas sun and ‘smokes’?”  
“I think it’s fine,” he answered,  
“But it’s awful far from my folks.”

So we lit a “hump” and passed ’em  
And asked about the “chow”;  
Inquired if he hadn’t noticed  
He was feeding better now;  
Prognosticated weather  
Like a tourist folder tells,  
And opined that digging trenches  
And dodging dummy shells  
Was hell, compared to sitting  
In the Q. M. soling shoes.  
He nods and speaks in sort of chokes:  
“You’ve got it right about the place,  
But it’s awful far from my folks.”

He reached in his khaki breeches  
And tightened up his mouth,  
“A letter my brother sent me  
Before we started south.”  
So I read the scrawly writing—  
They all were worried sick  
And hoped he'd get a furlough  
And see them mighty quick.  
“We'll soon be going over,  
And—of course a guy may live,  
Or—well, even if he croaks,  
It ain't that I'm afraid to go—  
But it's awful far from my folks.”

## *A Form of Conservation*

A General Order says  
To put our "putts" away;  
And so it's taps for them.  
Regret it as we may,  
An order is an order—  
It's canvas from today.

Until the blow was met  
We seldom gave a thought  
To what they meant to us—  
But since the havoc's wrought,  
We know in Mars' apparel  
We figure as a nought.

We think of selling them  
But always we defer  
The date—the thought of them  
Adorning some chauffeur  
Sets our finer feelings  
Throbbing in demur.

And so we pack them with  
The pictures of our kin,  
And when at last they still  
The awful martial din  
We'll use our leather "putts"  
To bind these verses in!

## *A Gay Night*

Through the mud and rain  
To town—to a “movie”  
Where the organ notes  
Fall as soothingly  
As a shower on a tin roof.

To a “movie”  
Where people live and love  
In houses—in rooms,  
Where there are lounge chairs,  
And pictures on the walls,  
And long shelves of books.

To a “movie”  
Where the beauty  
Of Elsie Ferguson  
Comes as an apparition—  
Woman incarnate.

And then back to camp  
Through rain and mud,  
To huddle in your non-uniform blankets  
While the rain trickles through  
The spark-holes in the canvas.

## *From the Warmth of Wonted Days*

Away from the warmth  
Of wonted days  
And the glow and thrill  
Of the flowing crowd—  
A pushing tide  
With driftwood faces,  
Swift of lure—  
Faces we come upon  
In the nitrogen glare  
Of shop windows,  
To lose a moment later  
In the shadows and shove.

Away from the elbow-rubbing  
Of the hotel lobby  
With its flow of activity  
And lounging onlookers;  
With bell-boys wriggling  
Through the press, paging  
This name and that—  
With groups of men  
In khaki and serge;  
With salesmen scurrying  
For their trains,  
While from the cafe  
And the mezzanine  
Comes the mingled echo  
Of ragtime and Mimi's song.



Away from the organ notes  
Of the "movie"—from Hart  
And Douglas Fairbanks  
And Norma Talmadge;  
Away from the jazz patriotic  
Of vaudeville—its dogs  
And dancers and acrobats.

Away from the clasp  
Of friendly hands  
And the welcome voices  
We have known so well  
And yet known so little.

Gone are the glow  
And life—the warmth  
Of newly wonted days.

---

Written in the Fall of 1917 when it was rumored the 33rd Division would soon leave Houston for an eastern point of embarkation.

## *A Burning Issue*

If you've kept a Q. M. warehouse with all its  
varied store  
Of bacon, corn and syrup bulging out the door,  
You know that promptly monthly you close it  
for the day,  
To figure up your reckoning with the U. S. A.

If a man's been awful careful to get a Sergeant's  
eye  
For all the stuff he's issued, he ain't so apt to die  
When he comes to prove his record; but even  
then you'll see  
That a lot of stuff is "debit" where a "credit"  
ought to be.

Now in Luzon on the Islands the sun is hellish  
hot,  
And your stock is apt to shrivel, shrink or go to  
rot,  
And the Q. M.'s who were out there were good at  
figuring bad,  
So the books were in a tangle—very, very sad.

So the chief civilian clerkie, telling at a glance  
That the wayward little depot didn't have a  
    chance  
To reconcile its books and wipe its slate up clean,  
Did a little quiet thinking and used some kero-  
    sene.

The night the chief got busy came a little breeze,  
And the fire wiped out the depot pretty as you  
    please;  
And to show you that suspicion didn't even lurk,  
The chief was recommended for fearless rescue  
    work.

## To "*The Army Tailor*"

Shirts O. D. I brought  
To your studio—  
Sleeves that met my wrists  
In the long ago,

But not now;  
Shrunk by laundries vile,  
'Til they hit me where  
They were just the length  
Debutantes might wear  
To a dance.

You, with magic shears,  
Eked them down anew—  
Amputated tail,  
Hidden from the view,  
Was the trick.

So with breeches tight—  
Fitted to a size  
Where I breathed without  
Hastening my demise,  
As it were.

Collars' scrawny height  
You, with baffling skill,  
Raised to fit my neck;  
So I swear until

I am dumb  
I will sing your praise—  
Twang without the mute—  
Sing the only rift  
In the awful lute  
Of misfits.

## *General Byng and Private Bang*

The King is duly proud  
(The morning papers tell us)  
Of the newest Flemish drive,  
Accomplished by the zealous  
Lieutenant-General Byng.  
So, struck by admiration,  
His Highness grabs his pen  
And tells the English nation  
He thinks so much of Byng,  
He's making him a General—  
To show his great esteem  
Is more than just ephemeral.  
But as we read the news  
About the King's elation,  
We noted with concern—  
Right after its narration—  
The toll of British dead.  
The count was not specific,  
But as you read you knew  
It must have been terrific.  
Of those who gave their lives  
There wasn't any mention;  
And while we credit George  
With excellent intention,  
It just occurred to us,  
While the praise of Byng he sang,  
If he gave a passing thought  
To the fate of Private Bang.

# *To James Alfred Gillespie*

*January 20, 1918*

Though you are gone,  
It is no simpler now  
To voice the love I knew  
Or find in fragrant words  
A threnody for you.  
Mute as comrades are  
Whose pledge of faith is dumb,  
I find when I would speak  
The phrases do not come.

When you were here  
We never put in words  
The kinship so unsought;  
As a silent garden rose  
Might flower without thought  
To fade in the day's grey hush,  
It grew so straight and tall  
We did not see the menace  
In the shadows from the wall.

So quick to give;  
Your willingness to serve,  
So fraught with fine intent,  
Became the gift of life—  
And what your going meant  
I know but cannot say.

## *The Sanitary Train*

Down the pine-fringed lane  
Comes the sanitary train,  
A long line of o. d. trucks  
Close on the other's tailboard—  
A lengthening streak of drab  
Against the green trees.

Truck after truck winds into  
The grey stretch of road;  
And where the exhaust spits out,  
Clouds of dust rise like smoke puffs.

Sharp in the brilliant sunlight  
Are swaying figures of men,  
Jostling one another  
As the lorries lurch along—  
And the rumble of them  
Is like the distant pound of surf.

Still they twist into the road—  
A long frieze against a blue drop,  
A lumbering line of retrievers  
To fetch back the hulks of men.

## *Lines to a Wrist Watch*

I chaffed as others did  
And flung a festive *mot*  
But that, my falcon true,  
Was in the long ago  
When time was mine  
To give or lend or spend  
—Before a bugle call  
Became the bitter end  
Of a perfect sleep.

I used to think it quaint  
That meters of the trist  
Should dare expose their face  
Upon a manly wrist.  
But that was long ago,  
Before I ever knew  
A sergeant's awful wrath  
Or what he says to you  
When you are late.



It's easy as a "civ"

To lean on frequent clocks  
And snatch the fleeting time—

That's why the townsman mocks  
The watch that lives its days  
Affixed to someone's wrist;  
But when it comes to U. S.  
You're first upon the list  
Of Johnny Gun.

To know your cheery glow;

To see your steady hands  
Tick off the weary hours—

The slowly running sands  
That trickle through the glass  
Of Time and speed its span—  
Is to come to think of you  
As a comrade and a man,  
You pal o' mine!

## *Coming Back From the Range*

Dust and heavy legs,  
Dust and stinging feet,  
Dust and throats a-thirst,  
And voices singing  
Several songs at once,  
Rising, mingling as the dust—  
*"We'll walk a mile  
And rest a while,  
We're sixteen miles from home."*  
—— *"Glorious, glorious.  
One bottle of beer for the four of us."*  
*"Huck-el-berry Finn  
—— el-berry Finn."*  
— *"until it's over  
Over there!"*  
Rifles every whichway  
And sagging shoulders;  
The rustle and swish  
Of feet dragging in route step,  
With now and then  
The cocoanut shell clatter  
Of horses' hoofbeats,  
And the mingling of other songs—  
Fresh choruses that belie  
The fatigue and weariness  
Of the dust-ridden straggling column  
Of blue-denim doughboys.

## *War Brides*

Jack Thompson went to a training camp,  
As a lot of fellows did,  
And took the course of martial sprouts  
And did as he was bid.  
He learned the drill and got his fill  
Of devious ways of killing,  
And met a girl and in a whirl  
He asked and found her willing.

They only met for a minute's span—  
They only loved for a day,  
But Mars and Cupid urged them on  
And no one bade them stay.  
He was a Lieut. and she was cute  
And after frenzied wooing,  
With a mutual thrill, they said "I will,"  
As everyone was doing.

Jack Thompson went with his regiment  
And passed through fight and fire,  
And aged a year with every week  
He lived in Flanders' mire.  
He came back home with an older "dome"  
To find the lady waiting,  
Still white and pink, but she couldn't think—  
So beware of hasty mating!

## *If*

If I should die  
My little death,  
    Think then of me;  
And let the tears  
You shed become  
    My threnody.

I would live on  
To know your love  
    And press your lips;  
But Fate drives hard,  
With tightened curb,  
    And whips and whips!

## *Jitney Problem Solved*

Coming in from Camp  
In a ramping jitney bus  
We note our driver's work  
And it occurs to us  
That it's a dire mistake  
To lose this Lochinvar  
When we could commandeer  
His genius for a star  
Of aviation.

We know the acid test  
They give to every man,  
We know they try his nerve  
By every trick they can;  
And still we feel secure  
In saying we should take  
This Jehu of the road  
And, ipso facto, make  
A daring pilot.

To see him miss a Hunk  
By a fraction of an inch  
Or brush a trolley car  
Or "civ" and never flinch  
Makes it seem a shame  
To think this genius runs  
A "Jit"—oh, why not use  
His skill against the Huns?  
He'd surely strafe them.

### L'ENVOI

O General Staff, please  
Send him far  
Across the sea  
And keep our streets  
Inviolable for  
Democracy.

## *Conscripts of Destiny*

"The Conscripts of Destiny"—  
We find the phrase  
Staring from the page.

Are we all—  
Selected men or volunteers—  
Merely the conscripts  
Of Fate?

Is our will—  
The individualism  
We, in the past,  
Husbanded so—  
Enlisted, like our legs and arms,  
For the term of the crisis?

Can we suffer  
The subordination of self  
And become cog-like  
In the intricacies  
Of the imperfectly working machine,  
And yet escape  
The discontent  
Which fills us all  
When,  
Like pins on a map,  
We cannot understand  
The scheme of the whole?

Are we all—  
Selected men or volunteers—  
The conscripts of Fate,  
Or are we willing  
To serve humbly—  
To suffer and bear  
With the toll of Circumstance—  
And still keep before us  
The vision of serving?



## *Home on Furlough*

I'm going back to blighty  
To rest in a "civvy" bed—  
Away from bugles' warning,  
Where I can lay my head  
And stretch my limbs on linen  
To sleep until I wake,  
And eat the sort of pastry  
That mother used to bake.

I'm going back to blighty—  
To hearts that all salaam  
To me as to a Colonel  
And not the "buck" I am;  
I'm going back in triumph  
To waiting arms and cheer—  
To all that's home and mother,  
To everything that's dear.

I'm going back to blighty—  
I'll be there mighty soon,  
And how my heart is singing  
With "Home, Sweet Home" attune—  
It sings with the engine's whistle,  
It sings with the clicking rails,  
For blighty's always blighty,  
And blighty never fails.

## *In the Shower*

Muscles rippling  
Under the dripping flesh  
Of stripped men,  
Figures of unconscious grace  
As they scrub themselves,  
And extend their arms and legs,  
Or throw back their heads  
To rinse off the lather;  
Or bend over  
To feel the grateful sting  
Of cold water on their backs.  
A dozen splendid forms  
That flash from pose to pose,  
Supple, strong,  
Exulting in the freshness and feel  
Of the splashing streams—  
God-made machines of beauty,  
Marking time, waiting  
For the pitiless havoc  
Of man-made murder.

## *To a Bunkie, Newly Commissioned*

Good-bye, old man, and luck!  
The best the army holds  
Is none too good for you;  
And tho' the Future's moulds  
May cast our ways apart,  
No bars or stripes can change  
Our comradeship of heart.

It's "curtains" for the days  
And nights we chummed as one—  
It's a final grip as pals  
Until the war is done.  
Good-bye—with little said.  
But what is "black and gold"  
So long as blood is red?

## *The Joy of Days Like These*

It's Spring down here in Dixie,  
And the glory of its days  
Thrills with golden wonder,  
As the glinting sunlight plays  
Across the pines, uplifting  
Against the sweep of blue  
Where clouds go winging northwards,  
Winging north to you.

It is Spring with a touch of Heaven,  
With the age-old thrill of life;  
And a million Pans are playing  
A melody that's rife  
With the lilt of childish laughter,  
Afloat in the vibrant breeze.  
It's Spring, and the love of loving  
Is the joy of days like these.

It's Spring—O, the zest of living  
When all roads stretch away  
To the green of other places  
And lurking holiday;  
When the scent of new green grasses  
Climbs to my head like wine,  
When gipsy dogs are barking,  
And I know that you are mine!

## *To F. K. M.*

You are so far away  
    Whom I would have so near,  
You cannot hear me say  
    What I would tell you, dear.  
I cannot clasp your hand  
    Nor know the gentle stir  
Of timid breasts that breathed  
    Of frankincense and myrrh.

Unknowing of its worth,  
    As one might stand and hold  
The art of Japanese  
    In a tapestry of gold,  
So I, in fragrant days  
    We filched from war's alarms,  
Came to know your love  
    And had you in my arms.

But had I known as now  
    The respite were so brief,  
And had I known as now  
    How quickly Chance—the thief—  
Would take you from my clasp  
    And leave me so bereft,  
We would have found a way  
    To circumvent the theft.

## *Your Letters*

Those packets of paper and ink  
We haunt the mail man for,  
To read each little page  
And wish it were a score,  
Are just a shadow self;  
And though with memory fraught,  
When what we want is *you*  
The lines we read are naught.

They haven't the thrill of your touch,  
They haven't the glow of your lips;  
At best they're only words  
That you sped from your finger tips;  
They haven't the tilt of your hat  
Nor the simple charm of your dress,  
And what is a paper vow  
Or a pen and ink caress?

They haven't the sheen of your hair,  
They haven't the joy of your smile—  
And though these letters are you  
And must be you for a while,  
Some day we'll put away  
These ghosts and lock them fast  
And hold you ever so close—  
When we come home at last.













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